Student Copyright and Permission to Use Student Work

Do you sometimes get a paper or project from a student that is so well done that you want to share it with other students as a model? Well, it’s important to know that students are the sole owner of their own work and hold exclusive rights to their work. Students’ copyrights include:

- The right to reproduce or copy a work
- The right to create derivative works
- The right to distribute the work
- The right to publicly perform the work
- The right to publicly display the work

In addition, a student’s work may be a part of that student’s “education records” under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and therefore may not be disclosed absent an exemption, such as student consent.

So before you share a student’s work with anyone else, even to show it off as exemplary, you must have the student’s written permission to do so. Also, when sharing it, students should be asked if they want to be named as the creator, or whether anonymity is preferred.

Another thing to consider is how one shares a student’s creation. Sharing a document that can be downloaded by others is not recommended. Obviously, one could copy and paste from nearly any online format, but it would be advisable to make it as difficult as possible for others to plagiarize or take ownership of a student’s work in any way. The recommendation is to limit sharing and use a (non-OCR) .pdf or image format.

It is also recommended that you choose those works you may want to share prior to the end of the semester in which they were submitted, so that you can seek the students’ permissions while they are readily available.

Sections 4.12.8 and 4.12.9 of the Faculty Handbook describe the university’s intellectual property policy and compliance requirements.

For more information on students’ rights to their own works, please also see the following two articles. Note the Google form in the second article that can be copied and modified/customized.


https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/sharing-student-work/